Emotional Hardening and Justice

Domenic Marbaniang

There is also something called lawful hardening, when you shut your heart to things that attempt to gain unlawful entry into it. There is something called emotional justice, when you are fair in the allocation of your emotions to things. For instance, the emotions that a man must have for his wife cannot be directed or allocated, not even an ounce of it, to any other woman. Similarly, the emotions that rightly belong to your kids cannot be allocated to anyone else. This doesn't mean that we don't have love for others; but, love is not lawless. Supremely, the emotions that we must have for God are exclusive and cannot be had for anyone else – they belong supremely to God: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"(Lk.10:27).

Indubitably, we must harden our hearts against sin in order to practice the righteousness of God. We cannot stake being favorably disposed to iniquity; for that will only destroy us. Similarly, when we know God's will our hearts must become like flint in order to fulfill what He says. We don't need to be moved by the compassionate words or tears of those who are not able to see God's will. Remember how Jesus once rebuked Peter for talking contrarily to the will of God (Matt. 16:23). Perhaps, Peter was very much concerned about His Master here, but Jesus was not impressed by such faulty emotions. The Bible tells us that Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). He knew that the Cross awaited Him there; yet, He set His face like flint because He knew that He will not be put to shame (Isa. 50:7).

The Bible provides some instances of the application of this truth.

1. In Genesis 21:12, God tells Abraham to not be in grief because of Ishmael and Hagar, but to send them away as Sarah desired. Sarah might have seemed to be very harsh here; and Abraham was grieved because of her words to cast away Hagar and Ishmael. But, God told Abraham to listen to Sarah (one of the places in the Bible where God wants the husband to listen to his wife). He is expressly commanded not to be in grief, because that emotion was unjust in that situation. It didn't honor God's desire and plan for Abraham. Of course, God was in control of the situation and He took care of Hagar and Ishmael.

2. The Bible stipulates a number of times in the book of Deuteronomy to not have pity in the execution of judgment on sinners (Deut 7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12). The spirit of the Law is that God desires mercy (Hos.6:6), but that not at the expense of justice. The Bible tells us that the Old Testament Law was a shadow of things to come. In that sense, I think that even the blessings and judgments of the Old Testament were only shadows of a greater reality to come. The blessings were real; however, they were only shadows before the real and imperishable blessings of the saints.

Similarly, the judgments in the Old Testament were this-worldly, the death penalty was physical, but in the Day of the Lord it will be final. His eye will not pity the execution of justice. He doesn't have pity on Satan and his angels; He also has no pity on those who willfully side with the devil. It's the divine instance of emotional justice. Forgiveness has its place in the emotional justice of God; however, forgiveness is not lawless. Somebody had to pay the price; we found forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb. He is our forgiveness. Only in the acceptance of Him do we receive forgiveness for our sins. There is difference between overlooking and forgiving. God overlooked man's failings in the past (Acts 17:30), but now commands all men everywhere to repent.

3. The Book of Proverbs gives us some examples of emotional justice:

- He who pampers his servant from childhood will have him as a son in the end. (Prov. 29:21)
- My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. (Prov. 3:11,12)
- Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer– may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?" (Prov.5:16-20)
- A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. (Prov.12:26)
- A man's spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear? (Prov.18:14)
- It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way. (Prov.19:2)
- Love and faithfulness keep a king safe; through love his throne is made secure. (Prov.20:28)
- Blows and wounds cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being. (Prov.20:30)
- If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered. (Prov.21:13)
- Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended. (Prov.22:10)
- Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him. (Prov.22:15)
- Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, (Prov.22:24)
- Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD. (Prov.23:17)
- If you find honey, eat just enough– too much of it, and you will vomit. (Prov.25:16)
- Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house– too much of you, and he will hate you. (Prov.25:17)
- Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips. (Prov.27:2)

- A servant cannot be corrected by mere words; though he understands, he will not respond. (Prov.29:19)
- The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures. (Prov.30:17)
- A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. (Prov.31:10,11)